

Child Diagnostic Assessment Information

Step 1: Registration of interest

To get started, we require a copy of your registration of interest (referral) form, which you can complete and submit yourself. All submitted registration of interest forms will be carefully considered by the team to determine whether our service is able to meet your child's individual needs.

We will consider multiple factors, including whether your child is under the age of 4 years 11 months and assessment for possible conditions other than autism (e.g., ADHD) is more appropriate. If this is the case, another service might be more suitable, and we will help you to access an alternative service if this is needed.

Please be aware that given the high level of demand for assessment services, we will likely receive a greater number of referrals than our service can accommodate and there will be a waitlist.

Step 2: Gathering more information

If we can provide your child with an assessment, we will book an appointment for you and your child and we will email/mail you the required consent forms and questionnaires. We may request copies of/access to records of your child's development, relevant health reports and pre-school information. This information will be used to guide the assessment. You will have opportunities to discuss your queries with us face to face during your assessment appointment.

We will also call you prior to your assessment appointment to get any further information, let you know what to expect and to answer any questions.

Step 3: Child observation

Prior to your assessment appointment, we will arrange for a member of our team to observe your child either in their early childhood centre or at home. With your permission we will arrange the date and time with the care provider and let you know when we will complete the observation.

Step 4: Assessment appointment

The assessment appointment will involve both the parent/caregiver(s) and child. You are welcome to bring a support person.

Parents meet with a member of our team for a comprehensive developmental interview. It is helpful to have the parent who knows most about the child's development present at the appointment. Where possible, we encourage both parents to be part of this interview. If this is not possible, we need to ensure that both parents consent to the assessment. Please make care arrangements for other siblings.

During the parent interview, we will discuss topics such as your child's early developmental milestones, likes and interests, play behaviour, relationships with others, their strengths, and any concerns you might have.

At the same time another team member will involve your child in a play-based assessment in an adjacent room.

In some instances, it may be appropriate to include assessment to identify or rule out other possible conditions, sensory needs, language and/or learning needs. Our team will discuss this if they feel this is needed and arrange an additional appointment/s.

At other times, a more in-depth differential assessment is needed to identify or rule out other possible conditions, which is beyond the scope of our diagnostic service. If this is the case, the team will discuss this with you and make recommendations as appropriate.

What should I bring to the appointment?

- Snacks and a drink bottle for you and your child
- A favourite toy or activity to keep your child busy when they are not engaged with a member of our team
- Any items/fidgets that may help you or your child to feel comfortable during the appointment
- It is sometimes useful to bring notes about what motivated you to initiate this assessment

Step 5: Feedback appointment

Parents will meet with one or two members of our assessment team to provide feedback on the assessment outcome. They will also provide recommendations for next steps.

If possible, it is best for only parents to attend this appointment. Please get in touch if you cannot find care for your child, we will see how we can help. You are welcome to bring a support person.

The Autism NZ Wellington Outreach Coordinator may also attend the appointment. The Outreach Coordinator provides support, information, and education on autism. This includes linking you to the right support services. Our assessment team can also help with referrals to support services.

The outcome of the assessment will either be an autism diagnosis, no diagnosis, or in some cases an inconclusive diagnosis. If this is the case the team will recommend a re-assessment at a later date, or by another more appropriate service.

Step 6: Diagnostic report

You will receive a detailed report which may be necessary for your child to receive funding for supports. This generally takes 4-6 weeks after the feedback to complete. Once it is completed, it will be emailed to you.

Step 7: Follow-up

If the assessment results in a diagnosis of autism, follow-up support from the Outreach Coordinator is available. This is a free service.

How long will it take?

Registration of interest: Our team will respond to your registration of interest within 4 weeks of receipt to let you know the outcome.

Wait list time: Our wait list time varies but is often over 12 months.

From the time of your first appointment, we aim to complete the assessment in 3-4 weeks. It can take longer depending on your needs and service capacity.

Week 1-2: Child observation. The observation will be for about 1 hour.

Week 2-3: Assessment appointment. The appointment will take about 2 hours.

Week 3-4: Feedback appointment. The appointment will take about 1 hour.

Please note, depending on your individual situation we may need to schedule additional assessment appointments prior to the feedback appointment.

Week 9-10: Diagnostic report. We aim to provide the report within 6 weeks of the feedback session.